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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: CIVIL SOCIETY CRITICIZES GRA'S ZIMBABWE DIPLOMACY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Representatives of Angolan civil society, intelligentsia, and political parties condemned the GRA's failure to take a strong public stance against human rights violations in Zimbabwe during a June 10th conference on "Democracy and the Respect for Human Rights in Zimbabwe." Conference organizers called for political parties to pressure the government for information and action, and are also planning a public demonstration. While unlikely to change the GRA's stance, holding such conferences is a sign of growth and confidence within Angolan civil society. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) The June 10th conference was organized by the Human Rights Coordination Council (CCDH), an umbrella organization of Angolan human rights NGOs, and the Association for Justice, Peace and Democracy (AJPD). Conference attendees included representatives from Angolan civil society, opposition parties UNITA, FNL, and FpD, the Angolan Armed Forces, religious and traditional leaders, and the British, Portuguese, and Russian Embassies.

"Diplomacy of Silence" Condemned

¶3. (SBU) Conference presenter Mario Pinto de Andrade, a high-profile MPLA member and international relations professor, strongly criticized the Angolan government's diplomatic approach to the crisis in Zimbabwe. De Andrade opined that Zimbabwe is in a lose-lose situation, in which neither side is likely to accept the other's victory. De Andrade bluntly stated Zimbabwe is careening towards a civil war, and no one is doing anything about it.

¶4. (SBU) While defending the GRA's sovereign right to conduct foreign policy as it sees fit - a foreign policy described as fully backing the ZANU-PF - De Andrade criticized the GRA's use of "silent diplomacy" in the face of actions that violate SADC and AU human rights charters and regional security concerns. As an example De Andrade stated that Angola, as the head of SADC's Peace and Security Organ, should have taken a strong stand and publicly insisted on a peaceful transition of power when Zimbabwean security forces stated they would not accept an MDC victory. During the wide-ranging Q&A, the GRA was frequently criticized for its "diplomacy of silence" vis-a-vis Zim.

Pro-Democracy Demonstration Planned

¶5. (SBU) AJPD and the CCDH are planning a public demonstration in support of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe for Friday, June 13th. AJPD also called for opposition parties and civil society organizations to exercise their right to demand that the GRA divulge more information on its generally closed-door diplomatic outreach to Zimbabwe. A representative from the Zimbabwe Social Forum, an organization of South African-based Zimbabwean ex-pats, also spoke on the reality of his country's social and political situation, and the potential role SADC could play in negotiating a national reconciliation government

shared by ZANU-PF and the MDC.

Concern for Angolan Elections

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: While the GRA has to date declined to discuss its Zimbabwe policy with civil society, the fact that a group could openly discuss the policy is a positive step in the development of Angolan civil society. Angolan civil society and opposition parties are clearly concerned by the GRA's failure to publicly condemn what is happening in Zimbabwe, and is worried that SADC's silence in Zimbabwe will be repeated should problems arise in Angola's electoral process. END COMMENT

FERNANDEZ